

**MID-MORNING FEATURING DR. MITCHELL KRUSE**  
**OCTOBER 16, 2012**  
**THREE ACTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS PART 3: DO FAST (MATTHEW 6:16-18)**  
**AND**  
**DO THE REAL DEAL: DO SIGNIFICANCE IN CHRIST (MATTHEW 6:19-21)**

**NEXT SHOW: NOVEMBER 20**

**THREE ACTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS PART 3: DO FAST (MATTHEW 6:16-18)**

Why do you fast? During trials or times of weighty decisions, do you leverage fasting as a magic wand with God as your object? Do you fast with the motive that others will see your plight and comfort you? Fasting means literally to abstain from food or drink; however, in the Bible it is accompanied with a humble heart toward God (Psalm 35:13). Fasting is an avenue of surrender to God's will for our lives.

Fasting appears in three forms throughout Scripture. First is a *normal fast* (no food). Jesus fasted from food for forty days preparing for His temptation and the inauguration of His preaching (Matthew 4:1-2; Luke 4:1-2). Second is a *partial fast* (no particular substance or act). Daniel ate no meat, drank no wine, and applied no lotion to his body for three weeks of mourning (Daniel 10:3). Third is an *absolute fast* (no food or water). Esther fasted from food and water for three days during a period of national crisis (Esther 4:16); Paul fasted from food and water for three days after his conversion (Acts 9:9).

In His *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus described the *be-do-go of full surrender*. In essence, He taught, "Who you are to *be* determines what you *do* which determines where you *go*." In Matthew, Chapter 6, Jesus moved from who we are to *be* to what we are to *do*. He began with three acts of piety in Judaism: (1) giving to the needy, (2) praying, and (3) fasting. In each, Jesus cut to the heart of the matter exposing why we do what we do. We either have a selfish motive or a selfless one. With each good deed, He described what not to do, then what to do. Jesus said, "Do fast" (Matthew 6:16-18).

**First, do not fast with the motive to be recognized and honored.** "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full" (Matthew 6:16). The law had provided for fasting once a year on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29-34; 23:26-32). The key phrase was "humble your souls" (NASB). By Jesus' time, the pious Pharisees were fasting twice a week (Mondays and Thursdays) because Moses was said to have gone up on Sinai on those days (Luke 18:12). Pharisees wanted everyone to know that they were fasting so they did not wash or trim their hair, and sometimes, they placed ashes on their heads. Abstaining from pleasures such as anointing their heads with oil to prevent dry skin was common, but they still made fasting obvious to the people they encountered. Others pretended to fast by disfiguring their outward appearances. In either case, they had a selfish motive.

Hypocrites were actors. They wore masks on stage, pretending to be one way on the outside, though they were another on the inside. Jesus said that if being seen (outside) was one's motive (inside), then the attention he had received was his reward in full (a reference to payment in ancient business receipts). There would be no reward of an intimate relationship with God because of the selfish motive.

**STREET SMARTS FOR THE RESTORATION ROAD...**

Ask the Holy Spirit to examine your heart for any selfish motive in using fasting as a tool to manipulate God or others around you. Surrender any impure desires to Him.

**Second, do fast in secret.** “But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matthew 6:17-18). Both anointing one’s head and washing one’s face, two common acts of daily life in Palestine, were forbidden by the Pharisees during fasting. Jesus did not say that no one can know we are fasting. Rather, He said that fasting should not be done with a selfish motive to be recognized and honored by others. Fasting should be done with a selfless motive to surrender our wills to God. When our fasting motive is unselfish, our reward is intimacy with our heavenly Father, the greatest reward of all.

### ***STREET SMARTS FOR THE RESTORATION ROAD...***

During your next trial or decision, humbly fast in secret as a support to prayer in an attempt to discover God’s will for your life.

## **DO DISCOVER SIGNIFICANCE IN THE LOVE OF CHRIST (MATTHEW 6:19-21)**

Would a little extra money satisfy any of your desires? Do you want to decrease your liabilities? Perhaps you desire to reduce your mortgage, pay off your car, or eliminate credit card debt. Do you want to increase your assets? Maybe you would like to buy a new car, a new boat, a new house, a new set of golf clubs, a new technological device, or a new piece of jewelry. Money in and of itself is not evil. Owning stuff is not from the devil. The problem occurs when the stuff owns us. Ironically, it isn’t money that we desire, rather it is something deeper.

God created us with at least four primary desires. The first desire is *significance*, which came from being created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27). The second desire is *contentment* from being blessed by God to be fruitful, multiply, and subdue (bring contentment to) the earth (Genesis 1:28). The third desire is *control* from being empowered by God to rule over the earth (Genesis 1:28). The fourth desire is *security* from being given every seed bearing plant and fruit bearing tree (Genesis 1:29-30). These desires flow vertically from the heart of God into each one of our hearts and then horizontally in our relationships with others (Genesis 2:18).

The first sin was pride, man desiring satisfaction of these desires apart from God (Genesis 3:5-6), who had created Adam and Eve with humble hearts. The object of their desires was their Creator who satisfied them. Pride made man the object of his own desires. Now each person is born with and chooses a proud heart (Genesis 8:21). He trusts in his giftedness rather than his godliness.

Money is pride’s measurement of our giftedness (time, talent, and treasure). Wisdom is humility’s measurement of our godliness (Christ in us). Christ is the image of God (Hebrews 1:3). He is humble in heart (Matthew 11:29), and He is the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). Humility is the beginning of His wisdom in our lives (Proverbs 11:2).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned His disciples about attempting to satisfy their desires with money, offering wisdom as the alternative. The first desire He addressed was significance (Matthew 6:19-21).

**Pride seeks significance from money.** Jesus taught: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth” (Matthew 6:19). Why do we *store up* treasures on earth? We do so in order to find significance, which is expressed meaning, purpose, importance, or value. Significance can be encapsulated in attention, acceptance, affection, and approval. Notice that the first four letters of significance comprise the word “sign,” which says, “Look at me.” People might say, “Look at him. He is successful.” Others say, “Look at her. She’s got it all.” We often say to ourselves, “Storing up this stuff really satisfies. I feel significant.”

**The result is insignificance.** “Where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal” (Matthew 6:19). In the end, the stuff is just that, stuff. The more we pursue it as the satisfaction of our desires, the more we thirst for more. The result is a never-ending cycle of dissatisfaction.

***STREET SMARTS FOR THE RESTORATION ROAD...***

Have you ever sought significance from money? What was the result?

**Humility stores up relationships.** Jesus continued: “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal” (Matt. 5:20). Relationships are the only treasure that we can store up in heaven because they are eternal. These relationships flow vertically in communion with God and horizontally in community with others.

Our treasures reveal the object of our desires. Jesus elaborated: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 5:21). Valuing people over profit, or relationships over remuneration, is what God designed for our lives. A proud heart searches for significance from money. A humble heart discovers significance in a relationship with God in Christ and shares that relationship with others.

**The result is the love of God in Christ** (John 3:16; 1:14). Christ is the love of God, a love that is so undeserved, a favor that is so unmerited, that it’s called grace. Paul wrote, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). God humbled Himself in Jesus Christ offering us the satisfaction of our desires when we humble our hearts to Christ. Only He truly satisfies our desires. This frees us to bring His satisfying Spirit to our relationships with a love that sacrificially serves others.

***STREET SMARTS FOR THE RESTORATION ROAD...***

Discover the satisfaction of your desire for significance in the love of Christ and carry that love to others. Initiate conversation with your customers and prospects, whether you are in sales or service. Get to know them, asking questions and listening, rather than attempting to sell them a product or service. Do it just for the sake of relationship—storing up treasures in heaven rather than for storing up treasures on earth. With your spouse and family, connect relationally, serving them rather than expecting them to serve you. You will be satisfied. You will be significant. You will be loved.

**Conclusion**

In our pride, we seek significance from storing up treasures on earth, and the result is insignificance. However, when we humbly center our lives in Christ, we discover that His love is greater than our desire for significance.